

NORTHLAND TŌTARA WORKING GROUP

NEWSLETTER 2023 by Paul Quinlan



Tohunga whakairo, Mark Howard, with his work Arai Te Uru

NORTHLAND



TOTARA
WORKING GROUP





LAMINATED TŌTARA FOR CARVING

Herenga Waka, by Lyonel Grant (Ngati Pikiao and Te Arawa Whanui), commissioned for the new Hyatt Hotel in the Wynyard quarter, Auckland. Photo supplied by Lyonel Grant.

Sourcing ready-to-use tōtara timber in large dimensions for carving projects can be difficult. Lyonel Grant, the renowned tohunga whakairo, artist, sculptor, and designer (of Ngati Pikiao and Te Arawa Whanui), has trialled carving laminated timber from the Tōtara Industry Pilot (TIP) project.

www.totaraindustry.co.nz

He found: *"The regen totara was totally adequate for this application. The method of construction was aided by having the material in uniform sizes which made sorting, machining, and assembly easier. I found also that it was a very frugal way to achieve form. There was the inevitable issue of opposing and overlaying grain variances. However, nothing insurmountable".*

The timber from the TIP project, was sustainably harvested from regenerated tōtara trees off three different farms in Northland. It was a mix of grades

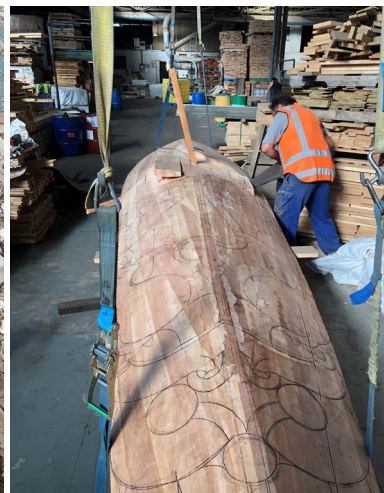
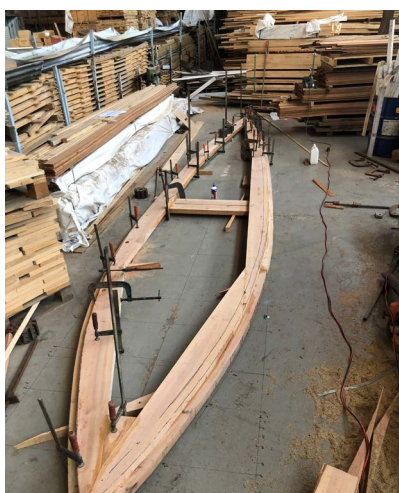
– mostly coloured boards that included some young heartwood and sapwood, all 50mm thick, kiln-dried, before being laminated together.

Lyonel says: *"While I found the product to be totally 'carveable', it would probably be comparable in texture and colour to firm sap wood of 'old-growth' material. I found the regen material an ideal substitute for old-growth timber, especially if the resulting work was destined for a commercial client, thus preserving current stocks of old-growth for more traditional or customary applications".*

"I would add that on another project I did get the material pressure treated prior to assembling the form. Because that particular finished carving was going to be outside, I thought it wise to have it treated".

When asked if he would use it again, Lyonel replied: *"If a future project required a substantial amount of timber to realise, I would certainly look to the regen product as an option".*

Images of work in progress showing scale and use of laminated tōtara timber. Photos supplied by Lyonel Grant.





TŌTARA FOR NZ-MADE FURNITURE

<https://innatefurniture.co.nz>

Innate Furniture is a New Zealand company making a stand on environmental principles. They manufacture in Christchurch, using sustainable local materials and NZ timbers.

Founders, Guido Loeffler and Nick Lee, were keen to trial timber from the Tōtara Industry Pilot project as a possible fit with the company's ethos and high-quality product range. They used kiln-dried, mixed-grade, tōtara timber from the TIP project's harvests.

When asked what they think of it, Guido says:

"We have started incorporating more tōtara over the past couple of years as it ticks every box of what we strive for when choosing a timber species for making furniture".

"We love the fact it is a native species, that grows in abundance in Aotearoa, and has a rich history, but also that it is a paler wood compared to the rimu and beeches we commonly use. This allows us to use a wider range of stain colours. Our experience has proven there is no issue with the "oiliness" of the timber as some claim, perhaps because it is

Totara timber to feature in a new product line.
Photos supplied by Innate Furniture.

new-growth tōtara. In any case, our natural tung oil stains and finishes adhere and dry very well. It is stable, beautiful, and a resource available in sufficient volumes for the future".

Guido is enthusiastic about the future of tōtara:

"We are backing tōtara to become a pillar of our business in the future and look forward to incorporating it into our larger contracts."

And, because NZ-Made furniture makers are perhaps the rarest heroes in the country, we certainly wish them well!





FEATURE TŌTARA AS INTERIOR LININGS

The architecturally designed Whare Wananga, called Whetu Marama is a stand-out building at the Sir Hec Busby Kupe Waka Centre, in Doubtless Bay.

Development Supervisor, John Panoho, wanted a contemporary but traditional design for the Whare and carefully attended to the interior design details. Pastel colours referencing harakeke and the windblown grasses of the sand dunes, were used on walls and vaulted ceilings to bring a sense of place into the whare. When John heard about an available supply of timber from the Tōtara Industry Pilot project, he immediately explored it as an option for the central feature wall, built-in seating, and the crowning glory – a significant area of flooring offset with sisal.

John says the result is much admired and he has been so impressed that he has subsequently used tōtara in his own house!

Tōtara panelling, seats and flooring adorn the whare wananga Whetu Marama. Photo supplied by John Panoho



“WORKING WITH TŌTARA AN ABSOLUTE PLEASURE”

– Nik Mathieson

www.thedanes.nz

Nik and Ria, of The Danes Ltd an architecture and joinery company at Mangonui, have recently used the sustainably harvested, regenerated farm tōtara, for their outdoor furniture designs.

Nik says *“The tōtara timber is stable, machines well, glues and performs perfectly for our purposes”*.

Custom-milled tōtara in large-dimensions for outdoor seating. Photos supplied by Nik Mathieson.





KERIKERI STUDENTS CARVE WITH SUSTAINABLY HARVESTED TŌTARA

www.northtec.ac.nz/info/kerikeri

Akonga (students) at the carving school Te Pou o Manako, in Kerikeri (a partnership between Ngāti Rehia and Northtec), have enjoyed practicing their art on tōtara timber from their local area. The timber came from a log donated by Pāmu (Landcorp Farming Ltd). It was the biggest log from a sustainable harvest featured in our 2022 newsletter.

www.tanestrees.org.nz/site/assets/files/1984/ntwg_newsletter_2022.pdf

Gordon Williams, Pāmu Environment Manager-Forestry, donated the tōtara log to the school and has since seen what excellent use has been made of it. Under the tutelage of tohunga whakairo Renata Tane (of Ngāti Rahiri and Ngāti Kawa), a Te Puia trained master carver, the students produced impressive works from large slabs of the tōtara. And, to complete the circle, Kaumatua Kipa Munro, Renata and son, Cavan Muunu Te Tane, presented Gordon with a Koruru, as a sign of appreciation for the timber.

The timber came from a 'second-growth' tree, typical of the naturally regenerated tōtara found on many farms in Northland. It had a 71cm diameter at breast height and a 6.0m long knotty bole with large branches. It was the dominant tree of a group and was thinned to give space to the better-formed trees around it. The log was milled into thick slabs which were halved in length, providing plenty of timber for use.

Gordon Williams of Pāmu, received this koruru from Ngāti Rehia to acknowledge the donated timber.

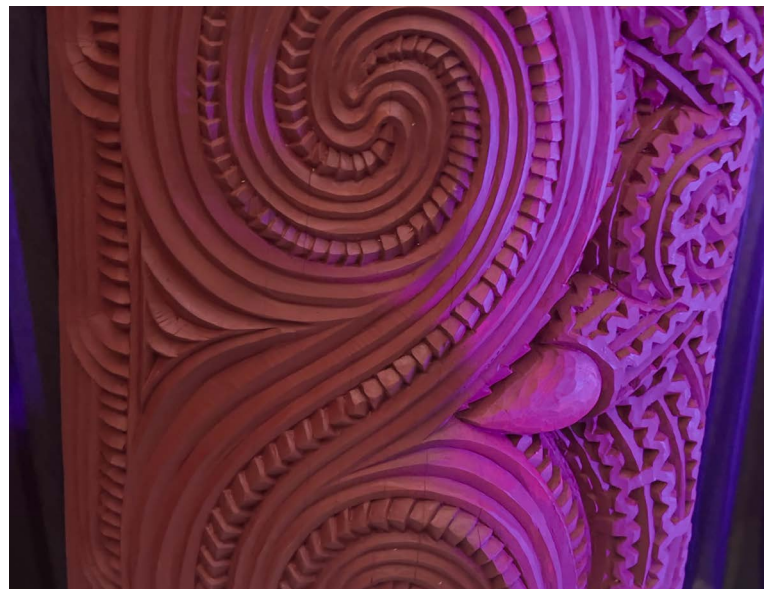




The freshly harvested log was debarked and delivered to Northtec's Kerikeri campus. It was slabbed and used green by the ākonga, of Te Pou o Manako.

See a video of the harvest:

<https://vimeo.com/692925422>



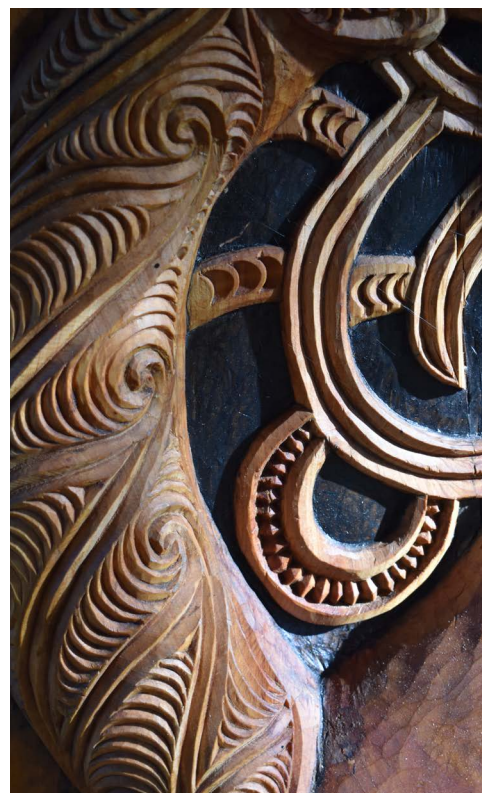
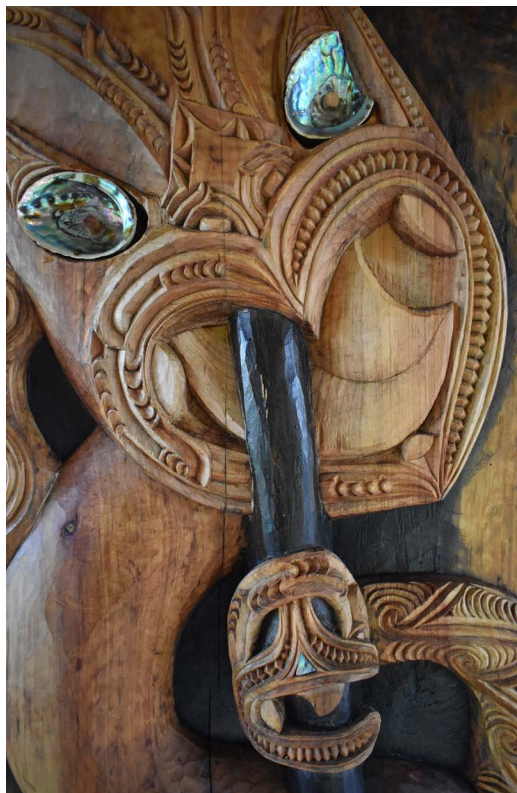
Renata Tane says *"tōtara always carves pretty well – even the sapwood. And knowing that it comes from our area, te riu o Ngāti Rehia, is a special connection. We always get asked where the wood is from."*

Having large slabs for the students to work on was also really appreciated. Bigger pieces mean more wood to come off, which slows things down, and enables Renata to get around all the students in time to help avert difficulties.

Renata also thinks having a supply of sustainably managed, regenerating tōtara is great for the future of carving, as an important source of timber to practice on and keep the skills alive.

"The opportunity to utilise our own native timber is preferable to anything else."

Whakairo from level 4 students at Te Pou o Manako, using regenerated farm tōtara from te riu o Ngāti Rehia.





GOOD POLICY DEVELOPMENTS!!!

In July this year, the government announced the gazettal of the final, approved version, of a National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB). This is part of a suite of measures to protect and improve biodiversity in Aotearoa. Importantly, the NPSIB explicitly acknowledges and provides for harvesting with approved Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Permits & Plans under the Forests Act (See NPSIB clause 3.10 (6), (e)).

This is a good thing. It reflects an acceptance that SFM under the control of MPI (Te Urū Rākau – The New Zealand Forest Service), should be compatible with protecting, maintaining and even enhancing biodiversity values of native forests on private land – i.e., within SNAs (Significant Natural Areas).

This recognition should avoid unnecessary duplication of regulatory controls and extra costs to the landowner (such as potentially having to get a resource consent on top of MPI approvals and control). Regional and district council plans will need to give effect to the NPSIB and be guided by it. We anticipate that as a result, harvesting under MPI approved SFM Permits and Plans will have “Permitted Activity” status in district plans. This should help reduce the regulatory disincentives and insecurity for landowners interested in sustainably managing native forest areas on their land.

The Northland Tōtara Working Group (NTWG), via Tane’s Tree Trust, submitted on the drafts of the NPSIB at each public consultation opportunity. We also had the privilege to show the Rt.Hon. Minister James Shaw, one of the properties involved

with the Northland tōtara projects. However, we also express our gratitude to the various policy advisors and experts within the Ministries for the Environment and for Primary Production, who put significant effort in to achieving this result. It serves to demonstrate that well-reasoned and substantiated submissions are considered and worth the effort.

This result restores some confidence in policymakers and the regulatory system and some hope for the future of indigenous forestry in Aotearoa.

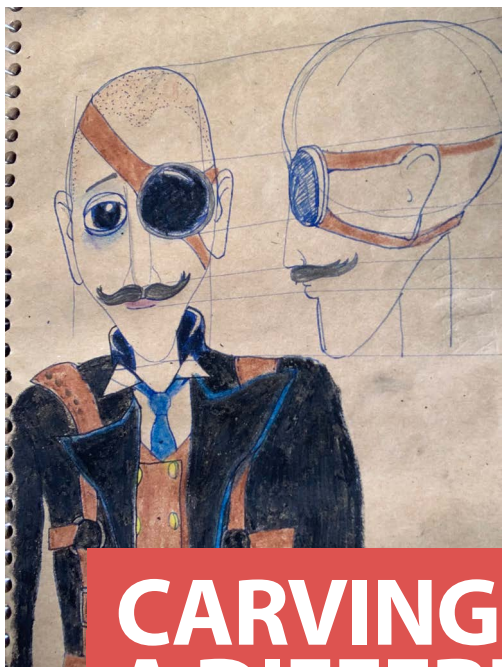
Biodiversity credit ideas

Announced at the same time as the NPSIB, was the invitation for feedback on the Government’s early ideas concerning possible Biodiversity Credit schemes. This is trying to create ways for landowners and managers to gain some reward for the ecosystem benefits that their forests and efforts provide society and the environment generally. The need for such a scheme was one of the main messages arising from the O Tatou Ngāhere – Our forest future conference last year.

Undoubtedly, there will be further opportunities to submit on this matter as the ideas develop. However, it is suggested that ensuring sustainable forest management, as practiced under the strict control of Part 3A the Forests Act, needs to be explicitly accepted as being compatible with any govt. administered biodiversity credit schemes. Not to do so would cast aspersions on the new NPSIB and the government’s administration of Part 3A of the Forests Act.

The potential for landowners to stack-up various revenue streams from their native forest areas (e.g., carbon, biodiversity, and some sustainable timber production where appropriate) may be necessary to incentivise the active protection, management, and expansion of native forest areas on private land.

It is so nice to have some good news to report on new policy directions.



CARVING OF A DIFFERENT KIND

Bellemare, the marionette carved out of tōtara.
Photos supplied by Steffen Kreft.

<https://kreft.work>

Steffen Kreft is an animation film maker, marionette maker and puppeteer in Greytown. He was keen to try working with tōtara for an upcoming show and tour. *"When telling New Zealand stories, I think it's important to also use timber from Aotearoa. This adds to the story's depth and beauty".* Paul Quinlan supplied him some sapwood tōtara to trial.

Steffen reports *"The tōtara wood texture is by far much more beautiful than the more subtle Lindenwood (the traditional European timber of choice). Looking at the finished puppet, I would choose tōtara over Lindenwood. The smoothness and almost glass-like sharpness of the cuts is very special".* However, some aspects were not optimal for his work. There was quite a bit of checking in a piece of 125x125mm totara used for the head (that wood had seasoned for less than 2 years), and the comparable hardness of the tōtara also added days of time to the carving process.

Nevertheless, Steffen says he would love to work with tōtara again, and to offer NZ clients the option of using choosing native timber.

Bellemare, the puppet made from tōtara, will feature in his next show at the Walk of Wonders Festival at Black Barn Vineyard in Havelock North, 14-17 and 21-24 September 2023.

"Shaving away with my woodcarving tools, I simply loved revealing the dense texture and colour of the tōtara wood".

– Steffen Kreft



Tōtara timber available

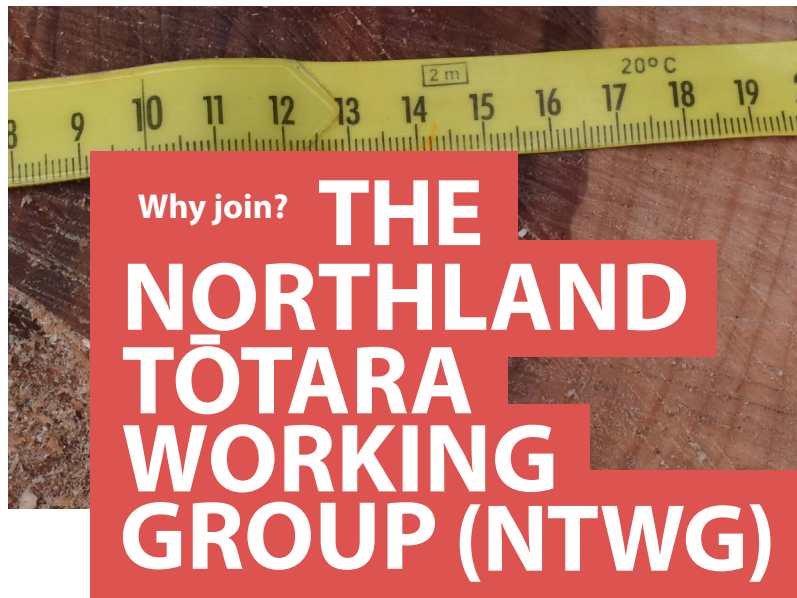
Timber from the Tōtara Industry Pilot project is still available for sale from Taitokerau Māori Forests Inc. This comprises mostly sapwood and coloured grades in 25mm and 50mm thick boards. Sales inquiries for minimum orders of at least 1m³ are welcome via Elizabeth Dunningham: elizabeth.dunningham@scionresearch.com, a registered Forest Adviser for this purpose.

Haloxypop spray trial over tōtara seedlings

Some alarming reports of planted tōtara seedlings dying have led to Tane's Tree Trust planning to undertake some herbicide spray screening trials. In conjunction with Kauri Park nursery, Tane's Tree Trust will be testing tōtara resistance to the commonly used herbicide release chemical Haloxypop.

Results from this up-coming trial will be available from the Tane's Tree Trust website – probably by the end of summer.

For further info, or to relate any experiences, please email Tāne's Tree Trust: office@tanestrees.org.nz



www.tanestrees.org.nz/about-us/northland-totara-working-group-ntwg

Starting a regional tōtara industry will need a network of connected stakeholders, from landowners with tōtara, harvesters, processors, millers, and merchants – right through to those keen to use the timber. Building a data base of interested parties is one important function of the NTWG.

But anyone in NZ interested in managing native forests and using native timber is welcome to join.

Latest developments, news, and project results are sent out in NTWG newsletters to people on the NTWG mailing list. Membership is free. And anyone, throughout the country who is interested, is encouraged to join – click below for the new membership page.

Remember to join – it's free!

Make sure you stay on the mailing list – register on the NTWG database (membership). [Click here.](#)

Who should join?

Everyone with an interest in growing, managing, processing, researching, buying or using farm-tōtara throughout New Zealand.

For more information, contact:

Tāne's Tree Trust: www.tanestrees.org.nz
or, email Paul Quinlan: pdq@pqqla.co.nz

